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FOR INFORMATION

STATEMENT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION OF THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED

1. The International Council for Education of the Visually Handicapped (ICEVH) is the largest organization of professional educators of blind and visually impaired children and young people. Therefore, in the context of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the World Declaration on Education For All, we respectfully call to the attention of the UNICEF Executive Board the concern of our world-wide membership of over 2,500 professionals regarding the situation of visually impaired children and young people.

2. Less than 5 per cent of visually impaired children under 16 years of age in the developing countries have access even to basic education. Moreover, current facilities in residential schools cannot cope with their needs.

3. In the light of the above, we recommend the expansion of integrated education programmes in standard schools, as this is more conducive to full participation of visually handicapped persons in society as a whole. This would also increase space in the existing special facilities for the growing number of multi-handicapped children who need services.

4. In order to accomplish this there has to be:

(a) A transformation of special residential facilities for visually handicapped children and young people into resource centres;

(b) Increased attention to staff development in the form of the training of teachers and other personnel;

(c) The provision of basic Braille and/or low-vision materials;

(d) The provision of basic educational equipment.

5. ICEVH cherishes its relationship with UNICEF and pledges its full cooperation in order to assist Governments through the provision of technical resources in order that visually handicapped children and young people can enjoy access to education no better and no worse than their sighted peers.

6. In view of the urgent need for a rapid expansion of educational facilities for visually handicapped children by the year 2000, we trust that the Executive Board of UNICEF will address these needs.